

ARI Research Note 91-22

①

Family Support and Services in the Army's Active Component During Early Stages of Operation Desert Shield

Laurel W. Oliver and Sally A. Bell
U.S. Army Research Institute

AD-A231 886

Personnel and Utilization Technical Area

Nora K. Stewart, Acting Chief

Manpower and Personnel Research Laboratory

Zita M. Simutis, Director

January 1991



DTIC
ELECTE
FEB 25 1991
S B D

United States Army
Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

01 2 21 027

U.S. ARMY RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**A Field Operating Agency Under the Jurisdiction
of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel**

EDGAR M. JOHNSON
Technical Director

JON W. BLADES
COL, IN
Commanding

Technical review by

D. Bruce Bell

NOTICES

DISTRIBUTION: This report has been cleared for release to the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) to comply with regulatory requirements. It has been given no primary distribution other than to DTIC and will be available only through DTIC or the National Technical Information Service (NTIS).

FINAL DISPOSITION: *This report may be destroyed when it is no longer needed. Please do not return it to the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.*

NOTE: The views, opinions, and findings in this report are those of the author(s) and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position, policy, or decision, unless so designated by other authorized documents.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

PORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified		1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS --	
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.	
DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			
FORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) Research Note 91-22		5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) --	
NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION Army Research Institute	6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) PERI-R	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION --	
ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) 11 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600		7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) --	
NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral Social Sciences	8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) PERI-R	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER --	
ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) 11 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600		10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO. 63731A	PROJECT NO. 792
		TASK NO. 242	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO. H2
TITLE (Include Security Classification) Family Support and Services in the Army's Active Component During Early Stages of Operation Desert Shield			
PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Oliver, Laurel W.; and Bell, Sally A.			
TYPE OF REPORT Final	13b. TIME COVERED FROM 90/08 TO 90/11	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 1991, January	15. PAGE COUNT 13
SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION			
COSATI CODES		18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	
		Operation Desert Shield Army family services	
		Family assistance centers	
		Family need of deployed soldiers	
ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)			
This report summarizes an exploratory investigation of family services and programs supporting the families of soldiers deployed in connection with Operation Desert Shield. The report provides information on the status of such services and programs for the Active Component approximately 2 months after deployment. The findings of the report are based on interviews conducted by an interagency task force at four Army posts. The task force members identified the following major issues related to family needs: (1) uncertainty associated with lack of information concerning the deployment; (2) inadequate financial resources; (3) difficulties concerning child care; and (4) lack of timely and reliable communication between both the Army and the deployed husbands. Resources available to families of deployed soldiers included formal and volunteer Army and community agencies, as well as relatives and friends of the families. On-post services were often provided through Family Assistance Centers. Rear detachment commands and Family Support Groups played an important role in some situations. Although we cannot generalize these findings, the results reported here will provide a direction for a followup of this exploratory investigation.			
DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified	
NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Laurel W. Oliver		22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (703) 274-8293	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL PERI-RP

FOREWORD

The Army Family Research Program (AFRP) is a 5-year integrated research program that supports the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) White Paper on the Army Family and The Army Family Action Plans (1984-1990) by developing databases, models, program evaluation technologies, and policy options that help the Army to retain quality soldiers, improve soldier and unit readiness, and increase family adaptation to Army life. This report contains information collected by an interagency task force whose mission was to investigate and report on the status of support for families of soldiers deployed in Operation Desert Shield. The findings in this report relate to the Active Component of the Army.



Accession For	
NTIS GRA&I	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification	
By	
Distribution/	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Avail and/or Special
A-1	

FAMILY SUPPORT AND SERVICES IN THE ARMY'S ACTIVE COMPONENT DURING EARLY STAGES OF OPERATION DESERT SHIELD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Requirement:

To conduct an exploratory investigation concerning the extent to which family services and programs were supporting the families of soldiers deployed to Operation Desert Shield approximately two months after deployment. This report deals with the identification of family issues in the Active Component (AC).

Procedure:

Members of an interagency task force interviewed family service providers, family members, and rear detachment commanders (using structured interview guides) at four posts that had deployed AC troops. Interviewers reported their findings in memoranda, fact sheets, and interview summaries. We used these documents to collect the information summarized in this report. We do not know to what extent the interviewees were typical of service providers at these installations, nor do we know to what extent the installations were typical of those that had deployed troops to Saudi Arabia.

Findings:

The task members identified four major issues related to family needs. These issues were (1) uncertainty associated with lack of information concerning the deployment; (2) inadequate financial resources; (3) difficulties concerning child care; and (4) lack of timely and reliable communication with both the Army and the deployed husbands. The researchers found there were a number of resources available to families of deployed soldiers. Some of these resources were formal Army or community agencies and programs. Others were volunteer in nature, and still others comprised relatives and friends of the family members. On-post services were often provided through Family Assistance Centers (FACs). Rear detachment commands--although implemented differently in different locations--were important to family support, as were Family Support Groups (FSGs), which also varied in degree of activity and organization. In general, local communities were

extremely supportive of families. The very high degree of support provided by family service providers and active FSG volunteers made burnout a potential outcome for these people.

Utilization of Findings:

Although we cannot generalize these findings, the results will provide direction for any followup of this exploratory investigation.

FAMILY SUPPORT AND SERVICES IN THE ARMY'S ACTIVE COMPONENT DURING
EARLY STAGES OF OPERATION DESERT SHIELD

CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
METHOD	1
FINDINGS	2
Family Needs.	2
Resources for Family Support.	3
DISCUSSION	5

FAMILY SUPPORT AND SERVICES IN THE ARMY'S ACTIVE COMPONENT DURING EARLY STAGES OF OPERATION DESERT SHIELD

Introduction

The Army provides programs and agencies that support Army families in times of need. Although these resources are available at all times, many families find this assistance of particular value during periods of deployment.

With the occurrence of Operation Desert Shield, the Army wanted to determine the extent to which family services and programs were supporting the families of deployed soldiers. Accordingly, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER) tasked the Community and Family Support Center (CFSC) to create an inter-agency Task Force to investigate and report on the status of Army support for families in both the Active Component (AC) and the Reserve Component (RC). The Task Force comprised personnel from the U.S. Army Research Institute (ARI), the Walter Reed Institute for Research (WRAIR), the U.S. Army Personnel Integration Command (USAPIC), and the U.S. Army Chaplain Support Center. The purpose of the Task Force was to conduct an exploratory investigation that identified family issues of concern in Operation Desert Shield.

Method

Representatives of the CFSC and the Task Force selected units from five posts. The posts represented varied deployment experience, whereas units represented combat, combat service, and combat service support types. The RC units represented rural and urban areas in several different areas of the United States. The researchers conducted both group and individual interviews with some 120 service providers, 12 garrison/reserve leaders, 25 rear detachment commanders, 16 family support coordinators, and 38 family support groups.

The interviews generally lasted from about 45 minutes to up to two hours. Interviewers took notes (usually employing interview guides developed by ARI) and reported their findings in various memoranda, fact sheets, and interview summaries. The authors of this report used these materials to collect the information included here. This report contains findings based on the information collected at the four posts that had deployed AC troops. As we encountered few male spouses, this report is limited to information collected on female spouses.

Since Army points-of-contact (POCs) handled arrangements for interviews, we do not know to what extent our respondents were typical of service providers at those installations. In some cases, we visited only one of several Family Assistance Centers

(FACs) at the post. Hence we cannot generalize our results to all Army installations or even to those we visited. Also, our results are based on information collected relatively soon (within seven weeks or less) after deployment had occurred. Thus, we do not know to what extent our findings are valid for later stages of the deployment cycle.

Findings

Family Needs

The Task Force identified four major issues related to family needs. Most interviewees mentioned these needs, although not all families experienced the same pattern. The principal needs involved: (1) information concerning the deployment itself, (2) financial resources; (3) child care, and (4) timely and reliable communication with both the Army and the deployed husbands.

Uncertainty. Uncertainty about the length of deployment and the potential danger the soldier would be exposed to caused considerable emotional stress. This uncertainty also led to practical problems such as whether or not to leave the installation and return to one's home community where parents resided. Another source of uncertainty which led to high levels of stress was saying goodbye to the soldier more than once. The emotional turmoil caused by repeated farewells was great and caused families to react negatively to what they perceived as indifference on the part of the Army.

Our impression was that definite information concerning the length of deployment (even if deployment would be as long as a year), was preferable to not knowing. In mid-October, there seemed to be little the Rear Detachment Commanders or family service providers could do to alleviate concerns about this issue. Family Support Groups (FSGs) and other support (e.g., community support groups) were helpful in reducing some of the tension engendered by all problems, including this one.

Finances. Family service providers reported widespread financial problems, especially among families of junior enlisted personnel. These problems covered a range of situations: loss of the allowance for rations, inability of the spouse to budget, increased expenses for child care and overseas packages, etc. Some deployed husbands had held second jobs, and this source of extra income was no longer available. Because deployment had caused a recession in the vicinity of some Army posts, we found wives who had lost jobs because of the local economic downturn.

Army Emergency Relief (AER) and the Red Cross service providers were able to provide loans in some cases of financial need. The AER and Red Cross service providers mentioned to

interviewers that some spouses did not understand why they would be expected to pay back the money loaned to them. These unrealistic expectations caused distress for the spouses wanting money.

Child care. Child care became much more of a problem after husbands were deployed, as spouses had depended on their husbands for child care while they ran errands or volunteered their time in community activities. Another need reported by FSG leaders and family service providers was for "respite" care--i.e., for child care so that the mother could get away occasionally from the overwhelming responsibility of being a sole parent.

Neighbors, relatives, and FSG friends helped in providing occasional care. For daytime child care, Army posts may provide direct child care through Child Development Centers. Family Assistance Centers (FACs) may also have referrals for obtaining such care.

Communication and information flow. Spouses and service providers mentioned the importance of communication. This issue involved (1) mail and telephone contact with the deployed spouse, and (2) the flow of information from the Army to the families.

In most cases, mail was slow in both directions, and spouses could not understand why it should take three weeks or more for letters to be delivered. Some spouses numbered letters so that they could determine the amount of time that was required for delivery. However, a few spouses reported that mail was slow at first but had become more regular. Some FAX procedures seemed to be even slower than letters. When telephone calls were feasible, they were expensive. Spouses with husbands in rear locations were sometimes able to communicate with them quite regularly. In general, though, there were innumerable complaints about the difficulties of communicating with deployed soldiers.

Another problem area of communication was from the Army to the families. Spouses found that regular briefings (with multiple sessions to accommodate the schedules of families) were helpful in disseminating accurate information. It was our impression that such sessions helped alleviate the worries of spouses as well as to quash rumors. Rumors constituted some of the more upsetting events for Army families. Hence, an important function of RDCs and FSGs was rumor control.

Resources for Family Support

A number of resources existed for the families of deployed soldiers, some of which were Army or community agencies and programs. Other resources were volunteer in nature, located either at the Army installation or in the local communities. Relatives were often a support resource, especially if they if

ey lived within a few hundred miles. Sometimes family members me to stay with the families of deployed soldiers.

On-post services. The posts experienced some drop in demand r services that involved face-to-face contact with soldiers .g., the drug and alcohol abuse programs). However, this was re than compensated for by demands to update and generate uments which became very relevant in the deployment situation .g., wills, powers of attorney, allotments, and other pay rds). At one post, the Office of The Judge Advocate General ponded to this increased workload by extending hours and taining volunteer help. However, this office reported that th the volume of work and scheduling difficulties resulted in eir being unable to meet all of the needs.

Some posts attempted to meet the demands for services by onsolidating family and related services into a 24-hour Family ssistance Center (FAC) operation which continued for as long as e demand continued. The services which were co-located in this ashion included: chaplain services, Army Emergency Relief (AER), food lockers, and pay and allotment functions. The hysical arrangements and operations of the FACs varied from lace to place. At some locations, this operation took place in single building. In other places, different elements of the ost (e.g., the Corps and Divisions) ran the separate operations. aving the family services located in a single place seemed to be preferred arrangement. In one place where it did not exist, ouses recommended that the one-stop concept be implemented.

Even though the peak demand seemed to have abated by the ime of our visit, most posts still offered 24-hour informational ervices through staff posted at their FACs. The main isadvantage to providing 24-hour service was noticeable staff urnout and the need to augment the staff with previously ntrained personnel.

Rear Detachment. A rear detachment is the military group eft behind to perform essential functions such as finance and ccounting, mail clearing, and the like. Among these functions s family support.

The rear detachment concept was implemented differently in arious locations. At one post, we found Rear Detachment ommanders (RDCs) at the company level. (NCOs served as RDCs for he companies, a lieutenant for the battalion, etc.) At another nstallation, a major with a staff of nine people performed this ear detachment function at the division level.

An RDC is generally in regular communication with the eployed detachment. Some RDCs spoke daily with their battalion ommanders in Saudi Arabia. One battalion commander's wife, for xample, was in daily contact with the RDC. She obtained

information for the Family Support Group and passed along to the DC any family support problems the FSG had been unable to resolve. We believe this kind of contact and communication flow is vital to relieving stress and helping to control rumors.

Family Support Group leaders. There was variation in the way in which the FSGs operated. We felt many key leaders were close to burnout. These women had their own concerns about their deployed husbands and their children's adjustment to changed circumstances. Yet they found themselves with the equivalent of full-time jobs in supporting the other wives in the unit. In some cases, it was difficult to obtain assistance from the other wives. ("The other ladies won't help us." "If we don't do it, it won't get done.") And some of the FSG group volunteers felt unfairly "used" when spouses for whom they were responsible expected them to provide such services as transportation to the grocery store and medical appointments. Some posts make an effort to help families to help themselves by providing training such as driving instruction and "powder puff" auto mechanics classes.

Community support. The local communities have generally been extremely supportive. At one post, the Directorate of Public and Community Affairs (DPCA) (Marketing) handled contributions. In other instances, community organizations provided direct support to families--e.g., support groups in the schools for children of deployees or the provision of transportation by members of a church. A number of service providers commented on the contrast between the substantial support by communities for the Saudi Arabia deployment and the lack of community support during the Vietnam era.

Discussion

Members of the Task Force noted the many hours family service providers, rear detachment command personnel, and FSG volunteers had been spending in their attempts to help Army families. The level of effort among these people was extremely high, and burnout appeared to be a potential outcome.

In spite of the high level of effort, not all families were satisfied with the support they received. We believe that this dissatisfaction sometimes occurred because of the spouses' unrealistic expectations. Some spouses believed that money from the AER should be a gift and not a loan because their husbands had contributed to the fund. A few spouses apparently believed that the Army should provide services such as transportation (e.g., to the grocery store) that the deployed spouse had previously supplied.

Service providers believed the portion of the Army population that most needed help comprised wives of junior enlisted personnel. Because of their youth and inexperience (and, sometimes, because they were foreign-born), these spouses tended to have multiple problems and the fewest resources--both financial and personal--with which to cope.

As noted above, we cannot generalize the findings we have reported here. However, we expect these results will be useful in providing direction for a follow-up of this investigation.